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Applicability:	DDSN Central Office, DDSN Regional Centers, DSN Boards and Contracted Service Providers

PURPOSE:

This document establishes policies and procedures to assure that concerns of people who receive services and supports or representatives acting on their behalf are handled appropriately and in a timely manner.

Concerns may be related to services, supports, or programs operated or funded by DDSN, a DDSN Regional Center, a DSN Board, or contracted service provider. Examples include but are not limited to:

1. The habilitation plan (service coordination, residential, day, Individualized Family Service Plan)
2. Restriction of personal rights and freedoms
3. Programs, supports, and service placement decisions
4. Access to files/records
5. Determination of ability to give informed consent

Contacts typically are made when the person who receives services or their representative feels their concern has not been satisfied through informal or routine contact with staff directly associated with

the service, support or program. Contact with someone outside of the situation provides an opportunity for objective and impartial review of the concern.

POLICY

All providers will have a procedure for people who receive services and supports or representatives acting in their behalf that assures their right to voice concerns without actions being taken against them for doing so. The procedure will be reflective of the values and principles of ~~the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs-DDSN~~ and will clearly delineate all steps in the process. People who receive services and their representatives will be provided with information about the process in a manner that is understandable to the person. Support will be provided, if needed, to people who wish to express a concern, but need assistance in understanding or following the process.

All efforts will be made to resolve concerns at the most immediate staff level that can properly address the concern. Efforts will be made to promote trust and open communication at the local service level whenever possible.

Concerns involving health and safety of people receiving services will receive immediate review and necessary action will be taken if the person's health or safety is at risk.

PROCEDURES

People who receive services and/or their representatives expressing concerns should be encouraged to seek remediation through their direct service provider's policy regarding concerns.

If the concern is unable to be resolved at this level, then the matter should be referred to the Consumer Affairs Office of ~~SCDDSN~~ or the appropriate District Director. Follow-up to a concern will include contact with the person or representative expressing the concern, review and research of the concern, efforts to mediate resolution, and documentation of all actions taken.

Facility ~~Directors Administrators/-and-Executive Directors/CEOs of DSN Boards/service providers~~ will be notified whenever a consumer concern involves their service area. Concerns generating media contacts will be coordinated through procedures as outlined in ~~SCDDSN Departmental d~~ Directive 133-01-DD: **Media and Publication Policies**. Critical incidents and allegations of abuse shall be reported as outlined in ~~SCDDSN Departmental D~~ directive 100-09-DD: **Critical Incident Reporting** and 534-02-DD: **Procedures for Preventing and Reporting Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of People Receiving Services from DDSN or a Contracted Provider Agency**.

Legislative contacts will be referred to the Director of Government and Community Relations to coordinate with the appropriate Division or District Director for response and follow-up.

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